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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the College of Career Practitioners, a program designed for the people who choose to deliver career support services to others. It operates on a combination of computer-mediated communication and printed materials. Students interact with tutors on-line and conduct most of their guided research for assignments on the Internet. The college is being transformed into a virtual campus. Electronic communication is the main way students interact with the curriculum content, their tutors, and their fellow students. eLearning study is a new emerging method of learning and can operate on a synchronous or asynchronous mode. Asynchronous learning, the model selected for the College for Career Practitioners, allows students to begin study when they are ready, work at their own pace, and complete studies when they chose. Some key features include: (1) enrollment at any time; (2) progression of studies at one's own pace; (3) tuition linked to completing requirement; (4) staggered payment of tuition fees; (5) global network of mentors; and (6) password access via Internet to secure Common Room; Reflection Room; Cafeteria; and Bookstore. (JDM)

Career Practice Skills through Global eLearning

by
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Career Practice Skills through Global eLearning

College Purpose and Operating Style

The College for Career Practitioners is a study program designed to enhance the knowledge and professional practice of people who choose to deliver career support services to others. It accommodates the needs of career practitioners in a wide variety of settings. Students interact with tutors on-line and conduct most of their guided research for assignments on the Internet.

Mode of Learning

The College for Career Practitioners operates initially in a combination of computer-mediated communication and printed materials. Module Study Guides, for example, are received as hard copy but subsequent communication is electronic, including the use of email and a dedicated web site known as the College Common Room. The College is currently being transformed progressively into a virtual campus. At present, the virtual campus includes a Reflection Room with nourishment for the spirit, a Cafeteria with a changing menu of food for thought and the College Bookshop. In the near future, the campus will be expanded to include a virtual enrolment office, virtual classrooms where the modules are received on-line and a library. Electronic communication is the main way the students interact with the curriculum content, their tutors and fellow students wherever their homes may be.

eLearning study is a new emerging method of learning. It can operate in a synchronous or asynchronous mode. Synchronous distance learning relies on the model of students and tutors gathering at the same time, although they may now be in different locations. Asynchronous learning, the model selected for the College for Career Practitioners, allows students to begin study when they are ready, to work at their own pace and to complete their studies when they choose. The College has deliberately chosen to develop its courses of study on the asynchronous model because of the Faculty's belief that working professionals want to act in self-reliant ways to optimize their own available time, learning and resources.

Key Features

- Enroll at any time
- Progress studies at own pace
- Curricula written by academics and practitioners
- Tuition linked to competency requirements of international career associations
- Staggered payment of tuition fees
- Global network of Preceptors (mentors)
- Password access via Internet to secure Common Room, Reflection Room, Cafeteria and Bookshop
- Award-winning design for 'outstanding program development and implementation'

- Asynchronous interaction with tutor (no time zone limitations)
- Networking facilities with students and subject experts in many countries
- Three study stream options
- Study content, references, URLs, contact lists, etc. updated each week
- No institutional semester or quarter calendar restrictions

Benefits of On-Line Learning

Because of time zone differences and the time constraints of students' busy lives, the learning design includes a series of asynchronous interactions between Faculty and students so that all will communicate at times and schedules that fit in with their lives. At the same time, the design ensures a sense of continuity, intellectual growth and relatively seamless participation by students.

The study framework for the College for Career Practitioners is free-flowing and interactive, and enables students to access experts in the field of adult career development whose expertise otherwise may be denied to them for logistic and/or cost reasons. It allows students to develop new ideas, exercise critical thinking and develop skills in global on-line research. The tutors facilitate dialogue rather than dominate it.

In our College, students are facilitated to pursue topics of their interest; there is 'space' for personal issues to be addressed; there is on-line discussion with tutors and with fellow students. In other words, the virtual communication mode of interaction is humanized. Student voices are heard, the individual respected. Specific help is provided to the 'technology-phobic' as all enrolled traverse cautiously but with enthusiasm through this Millennium-oriented learning process.

Community of Learners

Students enrolled in the College for Career Practitioners are joining others across the globe as pioneers of this new form of knowledge acquisition, intellectual debate and skills building. The College Faculty participates as a member of the learning community, adjusting both content and design of interactions with students based on feedback and observed behaviors in a consultative partnership.

The design of the College as a virtual facility with international Faculty members and students enables it not to be restricted by culture or physical location. It is capable of teaching practical career development and self-reliant career management around the world and, at the same time, draws on global resources and contacts.

College Content

Study Streams

There are three study streams. Firstly, all students complete the Career Development Foundations modules 1 to 4. Then each student selects from the three choices the study

stream of nine further modules which is compatible with their personal career action plans and worklife determination.

- Study Stream A, **Organization Career Management Study Stream**, is designed for career practitioners who are working or expect to work primarily within organizations in roles such as human resources staff, mentors, coaches, career support officers and trainers.
- Study Stream B, **Private Practice Study Stream**, is intended for career practitioners who expect to work as sole practitioners primarily as self-employed counselors or contractors, consultants, coaches and Employment Assistance Program (EAP) providers.
- Study Stream C, **Case Management Study Stream**, is intended primarily for career practitioners who expect to work in government-funded employment programs delivering career services to external clients such as the unemployed, injured workers and the disadvantaged. They may have roles such as client case manager, job search trainer or rehabilitation provider.

Curriculum Content

For all study streams, the curriculum content is organized around four cornerstones of learning necessary for career practitioners. These four cornerstones are Career Development Foundations, Practice Management, Career Support and Interventions, and Practicum.

Career Development Foundations (Part One) provides a background in the theory and assumptions of career development in the adult years. The content of the modules in this Part is the same regardless of which study stream has been selected. As students proceed through these modules, they will be guided in how to apply their learning from Part One to the study stream they have chosen and, in some cases, they will be assisted in selecting a study stream if they have not already done so.

Practice Management (Part Two) offers learning on how to operate successfully in the sector chosen for future work. For example, students in Study Stream A will learn how to design and deliver corporate career programs; while students in Study Stream B will focus on structuring their own business and fees and managing their clients' transitions; and students in Study Stream C will learn case management of clients in transition.

Career Support and Interventions (Part Three) focuses on the strategies students need to master in order to help their clients make successful career decisions and implement their career resolutions. For example, students in Study Stream A will learn how to work as career coaches to employees; students in Study Stream B will learn how to help their fee paying clients resolve career dilemmas; and students in Study Stream C will learn how to help clients overcome their barriers to employment or re-employment.

The Practicum (Part 4) allows students to synthesize their learning in all modules and utilize them in a substantial project applicable to their particular goals, range of career services and their organizational work setting.

Award Winner

The College for Career Practitioners has been awarded the Career Counselling Excellence Award by New Hobsons Press in conjunction with the Australian Association of Career Counsellors (AACC) 'for its outstanding quality in development and implementation'.

Competencies

The curriculum content develops competencies to the necessary standard to meet the criteria established by the International Association of Career Management Professionals (IACMP) as well as the expectations of the International Board for Career Management Certification (IBCMC), AACC and the USA National Board for Career Counselors (NBCC) certification. Other associations of career practitioners in many countries are being approached to endorse the College.

Career Value Use

The credit point structure of the course design is important for those students who may wish to use their completed study accomplishment for such purposes as:

- evidence of prior learning
- inclusion in job applications, transfer and/or promotion submissions
- attachment to enrolment applications to other higher education courses
- inclusion in portfolio application to the International Board for Career Management Certification
- credential statements in membership applications to professional associations or institutes to enhance assessment of membership grading such as the Australian Association of Career Counsellors
- a record of professional development upgrade where membership renewal of a professional body requires evidence of new learning
- application for USA National Board for Career Counselors (NBCC) certification via the Career Planning and Adult Development Network

Continuing Education Units

The College is committed to helping students utilize the efforts and accomplishments of their study not only in the work they then carry out but in securing recognition for their study in their home countries and professional associations. Because of the differences among countries, states or territories within countries and professional associations, the College is not able to give a universal definition of a student's eligibility for securing Continuing Education Units. However, the College will work with each student to endeavor to secure the most appropriate credit for the work completed.

Who Will Benefit

The study formats for the 13 modules have been designed to benefit:

- those wishing to transfer into the career service delivery profession in its many different forms
- employment placement consultants wanting to add career coaching to their portfolio
- school, college and university based career advisers wishing to make the transition into career services to adults
- human resource, employee development and training staff
- case managers for the unemployed
- people who wish to establish or extend their career-help private practice services
- human resource developers wishing to extend their knowledge base
- life coaches
- human care therapists wishing to extend their capabilities
- outplacement practitioners
- external and internal executive coaches
- performance improvement coaches

The curriculum content is designed for those who have at least four years workforce experience and who have either formally or informally been involved in proffering advice or coaching relating to career and life management issues.

Enrolment

Students may enroll in the College at any time, following a meeting or on-line discussion with the College Director of Studies to discuss the compatibility of the course content with their personal career needs and plans.

Because of the asynchronous nature of the learning, there are no institutional semester or quarter calendars to impede enrolment or progress. Students may begin their studies as soon as they are admitted and have paid fees.

Study is self-paced and directed by Module Study Guides. Each Guide contains a profusion of readings, worksheets, learning designs, assignments for assessment, optional exercises, etc.

Each Module Study Guide contains Internet URLs relevant to the theme of the curriculum to encourage students to extend their learning further with useful information and contacts, plus locate additional resources to enhance their professional activities. Several URLs will lead to further Readings. In this way, a greatly expanded bibliography of readings, networking contacts and resources is made available.

On enrolment, students are provided with the Required Text and, as they progress through the modules, receive a selection of career assessment instruments specified in the Student Handbook.

Building the Community: The College Common Room

The College Common Room serves as the main vehicle for the communication and sharing of ideas among students and tutors. Students are able to interact with the subject tutor and, if desired, with other students, through a dedicated web site using the bulletin board structure. The College Common Room helps all participate in the learning community of the College. A personal password to allow access to the College Common Room is provided to each enrolled student.

In summary, the College Common Room is a dedicated web site for the exclusive use of College students to:

- extend the boundaries of learning
- facilitate student-to-student interactions and sharing, plus contributions and responses from tutors
- facilitate an asynchronous 24 hour 7 days a week classroom—which allows for students dispersed internationally and in differing time zones
- promote on-line networking
- request help for use of cyberspace technology when needed

About the Author

Paul Stevens wrote his first published contribution to adult career development in 1981, *Win That Job!*, followed by *Stop Postponing the Rest of Your Life*. Over 38 further titles, booklets and career assessment instruments have been published since. He is the author / designer of the virtual career center *Worklife's CareerMastery®* for employers' INTRANET based services to employees.

He is Founder and Director of The Centre for Worklife Counselling established in 1979, Fellow and Life Member of the AACC, Visiting Fellow in Adult Career Development, University of Wollongong; Certified Fellow and Member, Board of Governors, IBCMC; Member, Board of Directors, International Career Planning & Adult Development Network; Fellow Practitioner and Member, Board of Governors, IACMP.

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